

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SERIES

WALTER HALL, 2:10 P.M.

NOVEMBER 12, 1981

edward johnson building faculty of music university of toronto



PROGRAM

Case Study, a multipurpose quintet (1980)

John Beckwith

Quintet 1: Trumpets: Robert A. Venables, Norman Garcia
French horn: Geoffrey Leader
Trombone: Susan Dustan
Tuba: Sal Fratia

Quintet 2: Flutes: Dianne Aitken, Joanne Geerling
Violin: Marie Bérard
Viola: David Wadley
Cello: Paul Widner

Quintet 3: Soprano saxophone: Doug Watson
Alto saxophone: Wendy Rothwell
Tenor saxophone: Jean Ducharme
Baritone saxophone: Brian Crone
Double bass: David Longenecker

Commissioned by the Array new-music ensemble in Toronto, on a grant from the Canada Council, Case Study is a quintet without fixed instrumentation. The five parts have different ranges but the work may be performed by any five bowed-string, woodwind, or brass instruments of the orchestra and band families. No more than two exactly similar instruments may be used. The score lists thirty different suggested combinations from more-or-less standard brass, woodwind, and string quintets to mixed ensembles. The premiere by Array (February, 1981) introduced a thirty-first possibility, not appearing in that list. Today's recital includes three different readings, the second of which was again not among the originally listed suggestions.

Because the common range of all instruments potentially available for each of the parts is always two octaves or less, the musical lines often move by narrow intervals: this is true especially in the opening sections of the work. Wider ranges are touched upon exceptionally in one passage, where each instrument is asked to play ad-lib chromatic scale-fragments at the outer extremes of its range. Similarly, sounds idiomatic to each instrument are called for in a series of ad-lib "interjections" which disturb the general continuity from time to time; here players produce given pitches with tone-colors peculiar to their individual instruments. These are two ways of lending occasional idiomatic character to a piece that is by definition anti-idiomatic.

Like my Taking a Stand (1972), Musical Chairs (1973), and Keyboard Practice (1979), Case Study is also concerned with actions. There is a plan of entrances and exits, and the musical structure incorporates as essential elements some of the ritual procedures normally connected with instrumental performances--packing and unpacking the instrument-case; assembling and dismantling the instrument; tuning. Normally these occur outside the frame of the piece; here they occur within it. The instrument-cases themselves assume instrumental properties and are used for a percussive duet and series of rhythmic dialogues at certain points. Intimate activities such as the application of resin or lubricants, the emptying of saliva and removal of loose bow-hairs, also become integral to the score. Altogether, the piece should provide a concentrated illustration of the private (and, to a non-player, mysterious) ministrations required for the production of musical sounds. At the same time, of course, it is a piece to be heard.

I express my sincere thanks to the fifteen performers, who have devoted considerable time towards the preparation of today's program.

-- J.B.